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Agenda item 115 of the provisional agenda*
Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly a note dated 15 July 1998 from the Joint Inspection Unit regarding its decision to revert to the previous January–December cycle for its programme of work and to adjust its annual report to the same cycle.

Note of the Joint Inspection Unit dated 15 July 1998 regarding its decision to revert to the previous January–December cycle for its programme of work and to adjust its annual report to the same cycle

1. In its 1995 annual report, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) informed participating organizations of its decision to shift its work programme cycle from January–December to July–June. The rationale for this shift was to synchronize better the issuance of Unit reports with the calendars of a number of the legislative organs of its participating organizations, which meet in the second half of the year.

2. Experience with the July–June work programme cycle has demonstrated no significant improvement in synchronization with the calendars of the legislative organs. This has been due in part to the time required for data collection and analysis in the preparation of system-wide reports on which the Unit has put renewed emphasis, reflecting the invitation of the General Assembly, as expressed, *inter alia*, in paragraph 10 of its resolution 50/233 of 7 June 1996.

3. Furthermore, the Unit notes that its biennial programme budget relates to a January–December cycle and that action on the budget by the General Assembly coincides with the General Assembly's biennial review of the annual reports of the Unit. In view of

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this, and of the increased focus on results when budgetary matters are being considered, the Unit believes it would be more appropriate for the cycle of its work programme and annual report to accord with the cycle of the budget. In this regard, the Unit plans to complement the presentation of its biennial programme budget estimates with an indicative listing of reports under consideration for preparation during the forthcoming biennium, in order to give Member States a better understanding of the planned scope of JIU activities and the results to be achieved by the Unit. This also would allow the Unit, in deciding on its annual programme of work, to take account of the views expressed by Member States regarding the indicative listing of reports, as well as the budget estimates actually approved.

4. For the above reasons, the Unit has decided to revert to its previous January–December cycle for its programme of work and to adjust its annual report to the same cycle. Consequently, as a transitional measure, the Unit has further decided to extend its current 1997–1998 programme of work (A/52/267) through 31 December 1998.

5. Given this six-month extension, the following items have been added to the 1997–1998 programme of work:

(a) Note to the Secretary-General on the structure and mandate of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The objective of this note is to assess whether or not the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), which was formed through the consolidation of Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA), Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) and Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS), is structured and entrusted with a mandate covering the mandates of these three formerly separate Departments, taking into account the pertinent comments and recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) when it considered section 7A of the revised programme budget.

(b) Report on practices and procedures for senior-level appointments

As suggested in the recommendations of the Open-ended High-level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System which were approved by the General Assembly in resolution 51/241 of 15 September 1997, the objective of this report is to provide an in-depth examination of the practices and procedures for senior level appointments with a view, in particular, to recommending some rationalization of the selection process and to make it more transparent, where appropriate, as well as more practically effective. The report also will provide advice as to the means of attaining the goals of the Organization with respect to gender balance and to unrepresented and under-represented countries at that level of appointment.

The Unit intends to prepare the report in two parts: Part I: United Nations Secretariat and secretariats of United Nations-affiliated bodies; and, Part II: Specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This report will be initiated in the second half of 1998, but its completion is expected to carry over into 1999.

(c) Overview of experience of United Nations system organizations with results-based-budgeting

The planned report is intended to provide, to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, a factual report reviewing and presenting systematically

the experience that the organizations of the United Nations system have had with results-based-budgeting. It will present this experience in terms of the major issues or problems that have been identified by Member States and secretariats regarding application of the concept of results-based budgeting, such as: definition of results, output, and impact; performance indicators; role of internal and external review bodies; relationship to the medium-term plan. This review would provide background information to assist the General Assembly in its consideration of the Secretary-General's proposal to use results-based-budgeting for the programme budget for the 2000–2001 biennium.

6. In the preparation of its January–December 1999 programme of work, the Unit will draw on the attached preliminary listing of planned reports for 1999 and beyond. The Unit would appreciate receipt of comments on this preliminary listing, as well as additional requests from the competent legislative organs and/or suggestions by the Executive Heads of its participating organizations and the bodies of the United Nations system concerned with budgetary control, investigation, coordination and evaluation, before it decides in January 1999 on its 1999 programme of work.

Annex

Preliminary listing of planned reports and notes for 1999 and beyond

1. Review of management and administration in the World Health Organization.
2. Effectiveness of the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) in the United Nations.
3. Planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation procedures in the United Nations system.
4. United Nations revenue-producing activities: income generation and cost recovery.
5. Evaluation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women.
6. Review of the administrative and financial management systems of the International Court of Justice.
7. The role and impact of private sector involvement and collaboration with the United Nations system.
8. Policies and procedures for eliciting, accepting, recording and reporting commercial and other sponsorships for events and other undertakings held within the United Nations system.
9. Review of the functioning of the administration of justice in the United Nations Secretariat.
10. Support costs on programmes and activities financed from extrabudgetary resources.
11. Practice of donors attaching conditions to special-purpose contributions.
12. Delegation of authority.
13. Data sharing for the United Nations system.
14. Extending successful technical cooperation projects to the end beneficiaries.
15. Handling of Joint Inspection Unit reports by participating organizations.
16. Standardization of reporting format and procedures for single country projects financed by several donors.
17. Review of the reform process in the International Trade Centre.